

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

ICA-11 SAA-01 AID-05 SNM-05 NEAE-00 IO-13 /100 W

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P R 201237Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8793

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY DONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4088

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SOPN, LE, US

SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON US ROLE IN LEBANON

1. SUMMARY. FREQUENT THEME OF LEFTIST AND PRO-PALESTINIAN PRESS IN BEIRUT IN RECENT MONTHS HAS BEEN TO PORTRAY THE USG AS "THE GODFATHER" OF MOST EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS HERE. LATELY THERE HAVE BEEN INNUENDOS THAT THE UNITED STATES IS SOMEHOW SUPPORTING THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS IN THEIR GROWING STRUGGLE WITH THE SYRIANS. ON THE OTHER HAND, RIGHTISTS HAVE DEMANDED THAT THE US INTERVENE TO PUT A STOP TO SYRIAN MILITARY ACTION AND HAVE CLAIMED US WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SARKIS' THREAT TO RESIGN. EVEN CENTRIST AN NAHAR HAS IMPLIED U.S. RESPONSIBLE FOR PROBLEMS

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IN LEBANON. END SUMMARY.

2. IT IS STANDARD PART OF LEBANESE POLITICAL MYTHOLOGY THAT FOREIGN POWERS PLAY IMPORTANT, EVEN DECISIVE ROLE IN DETERMINING EVENTS IN LEBANON. THE GREATER THE FOREIGN POWER, ACCORDING TO THIS MIND-SET, THE GREATER THE INFLUENCE. LEFTIST AND PRO-PAL-ESTINIAN PRESS HERE FOR MONTHS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPING THESE OF

AMBASSADOR PARKER AS THE "GODFATHER" OF ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED. RECENT PHALANGIST MASSACRE OF TONY FRANJIYAH AND OTHER NORTHERN MARONITES, IN THIS CONSPIRATORIAL OUTLOOK, WAS INSPIRED IN FIRST INSTANCE BY ISRAELIS, USING THEIR INFLUENCE WITH BACHIR GEMAYEL, AND BEHIND THE ISRAELIS, THE UNITED STATES. ACCORDING TO THIS THEORY, INTRA-MARONITE FIGHTING WOULD GENERALLY WEAKEN THE MARONITE CAMP, THUS FACILITATING THE PERMANENT IMPLANTATION OF PALESTINIANS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. (WE NOTE THAT THIS GENERAL OUTLOOK IS SOMETIMES REFLECTED IN SYRIAN POLITICAL CIRCLES AS WELLN-SEE DAMASCUS 3690.)

3. THE JUNE 26 EDITION OF THE PRO-LIBYAN WEEKLY AL KIFAH AL ARABI ALLEGED THAT AMBASSADOR PARKER HAD RETURNED SUDDENLY TO BEIRUT FROM "OPEN LEAVE" AND THAT "POLITICAL CIRCLES" BELIEVED THAT HIS RETURN WAS CONNECTED WITH ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTH LEBANON AND THE IHDIN MASSACRE. THE MAGAZINE CLAIMED THAT "AMERICAN INTEREST DICTATED THAT THE 'GODFATHER' BE PRESENT, SO HE COULD PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THESE DEVELOPMENTS AND THAT HE WOULD TRY TO NARROW DISPUTES AMONG "WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE LEBANESE FRONT."

4. IN JULY 13 MEETING WITH EMBOFF, BA'TH PARTY LEADER ASSEN QANSUH ALLEGED THAT THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR (SIC) IN DAMASCUS HAD INFORMED SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAN THAT PRIME MINISTER BEGIN HAD ORDERED THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA IN LEBANON TO STOP FIGHTING. QANSUH ALSO CLAIMED THAT THE "AMERICAN AMBASSADOR" CONFIDENTIAL

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HAD MADE IT CLEAR TOKHADDAM THAT THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA WERE UNDER THE ORDERS OF THE ISRAELIS. (COMMENT: WE REALIZE THAT CHARGE PELLETTREAU DID NOT REPEAT NOT MAKE THIS STATEMENT TO KHADDAM. WE REPORT IT ONLY AS AN INDICATION OF WHAT QANSUH SAYS HE BELIEVES TO BE THE EXTENT OF ISRAELI CONTROL OVER THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS AND, GIVEN THE LEBANESE PROCLIVITY FOR BLAMING ISRAELI ACTIONS ON THE UNITED STATES, BY EXTENSION AMERICAN INFLUENCE OVER THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS.)

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AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 4088

5. IN A BANNER STORY ON JULY 14, LEFTIST AS SAFIR CLAIMED THAT US POLICY IS A "PUZZLE" BASED ON TWO CONTRADICTORY LINES VIS-A-VIS BEIRUT AND DAMASCUS. ACCORDING TO AS SAFIR, SOME AMERICAN OFFICIALS ARE SUPPORTING THE LEBANESE FRONT WHILE OTHERS ARE ADVISING PRESIDENT SARKIS TO CUT THE PHALANGISTS DOWN TO SIZE. THERE WERE ALSO CONTRADICTORY LINES IN THE AMERICAN EMBASSY ON THE LEBANESE ARMY, THE PAPER SAID. SOME MEMBERS OF THE EMBASSY WERE ADVOCATING REBUILDING THE PRESENT LEBANESE ARMY QUICKLY TO SPEED UP THE ADF'S WITHDRAWAL, WHILE THE "SECOND LINE WAS TO ENCOURAGE THE REGIME TO BUILDING A BALANCED ARMY TO ENABLE IT TO ESTABLISH ITS AUTHORITY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY." THESE CONTRADICTIONS ALLEGEDLY LED AMBASSADOR PARKER TO TAKE LEAVE IN WASHINGTON. THE PAPER ALSO PROFESSED TO SEE (UNSPECIFIED) SIGN-CONFIDENTIAL

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IFICANCE IN THE TRANSFER OF AMBASSADOR MURPHY FROM DAMASCUS, AS WELL AS DCM LANE AND FIRST SECRETARY MOLINEAUX FROM BEIRUT.

6. ON JULY 15 AS SAFIR CARRIED A CONTINUATION TO ITS "PUZZLE" ARTICLE. THE PAPER EXPLAINED THAT WHILE THE AMERICANS WERE EAGER TO WEAKEN SYRIAN INFLUENCE IN LEBANON, THEY DID NOT NOW FAVOR PARTITION. THUS THE UNITED STATES "SUPPORTS THE FRONT IN ITS CLASH WITH SYRIA BUT STOPS AT A CERTAIN LIMIT WHEN THESE CLASHES REACH THE POINT WHICH ENDANGERS THE ABILITY OF UNITED STATES TO CONTINUE ITS DIALOGUE WITH SYRIA." AS SAFIR CONCLUDED THAT "THE SOLUTION TO THE PUZZLE IS VERY SIMPLE." WASHINGTON IS KEEPING TENSION AT A HIGH LEVEL "IN THE INTEREST OF POLITICAL SETTLEMENT AND IN REFLOATING THE SADAT INITIATIVE."

7. OTHER EXTREME OF LEBANESE OPINION IS THAT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD BE CRITICIZED FOR NOT REPEAT NOT HELPING OUT THE CHRIST- IANS. CAMILLE CHAMOUN JULY 2 ISSUED "AN APPEAL FOR THE INTER- VENTION OF CIVILIZED PEOPLE AGAINST THE WAR OF EXTERMINATION UNDERTAKEN BY SYRIA AGAINST AN UNARMED CIVILIAN POPULATION. . . THIS APPEAL IS ADDRESSED TO THE UNITED STATES, THE SOVIET UNION, THE UNITED KINGDOM, FRANCE, THE VATICAN AS WELL AS TO ALL COUNTRIES HAVING A SENSE OF HUMAN VALUES." POPULAR THEME HERE AMONG MARONITE POLITICIANS, IS THAT UNITED STATES HAS A MORAL OBLIGATION TO SAVE LEBANON FROM ITS VARIOUS ENEMIES, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIANS, THE SYRIAN AND LEFTISTS WHO ARE "FOREIGN AGENTS."

8. PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL TOLD THE PRESS ON JULY 18 THAT "THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES, INSTEAD OF HELPING PRE- SIDENT SARKIS, "THREW A MONKEY WRENCH INTO THE WHEELS OF THE LEBANESE REGIME. IN VIEW OF THE SITUATION, THE PRESIDENT DECIDED TO RESIGN."

9. EVEN CENTRIST AN NAHAR ON JULY 3 IMPLIED US WAS RESPONSIBLE
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FOR LEBANESE PROBLEMS IN SOUTH AND ELSEWHERE. IN STORY ATTRIBUT- ED TO "GOVERNMENTAL SOURCES," AN NAHAR SAID THAT "PRESIDENT SARKIS IS CONSIDERING THE IDEA OF DISPATCHING FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS TO THE UNITED STATES TO CLARIFY. . . THE REASONS BEHIND US RELUCTANCE TO HELP LEBANON WHETHER IN THE SOUTH OR IN OTHER AREAS THROUGH PRESSURING CONCERNED PARTIES THAT HAVE DIRECT OR INDIRECT RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. . . LEBANON WILL ASK, IN CASE THE VISIT TAKES PLACE, TO BE INFORMED WHETHER (THE OVER- ALL MIDDLE EAST) SETTLEMENT WILL BE ACHIEVED AT THE EXPENSE OF LEBANON. . ." (THIS EMBASSY HAS NOT REPEAT NOT BEEN APPROACHED BY GOL ABOUT A POSSIBLE BOUTROS VISIT TO THE US.)

10. COMMENT. THERE IS PROBABLY LITTLE WE CAN DO ABOUT THESE KINDS OF ACCUSATIONS. AS ADDRESSEES KNOW ALREADY, THE LEBANESE ARE PARTICULARLY ADEPT AT FINDING SCAPEGOATS FOR THEIR OWN PROBLEMS. WE WOULD NOT PAY MUCH ATTENTION TO THESE ALLEGATIONS IF GOVERN- MENT OFFICIALS IN PLACES LIKE KUWAIT AND BAHRAIN DID NOT TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY. ADDRESSEES IN GULF MAY ASSURE HOST GOVERNMENTS: (1) WE ARE NOT SUPPORTING CHRISTIAN MILITIAS, (2) WE ARE SUP- PORTING UNITY OF LEBANON, (3) WE ARE NOT TRYING TO FRUSTRATE SYRIAN EFFORTS HERE. STORY PUBLISHED BY KUWAITI AL-QABAS THAT WE AND SAUDIS ARE TRYING TO GET GOL TO REDUCE PROPORTION OF SYRIAN TROOPS IN ADF, FOR INSTANCE, IS TOTAL FABRICATION. ALSO COM- PLETELY UNTRUE IS STORY CARRIED IN LEFTIST AL LIWA ON JULY 14 THAT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY HAD ORDERED ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS IN LEBANON TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY BY JULY 24. (NO SUCH ORDERS FOR THIS OR ANY OTHER DATE HAVE BEEN ISSUED.)
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TAGS: SOPN, PINT, LE, US
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